

THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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GRETCHEN.

By the Author of "Dame Durden," "My Lord Conceit,"
"Darby and Joan," "Corinna," etc.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER II. "DECEIVED!"

THE room was empty again—it had been empty for a long time—and yet Alexis Kenyon did not seem to realise the fact.

She had dismissed Bari with that proud guard still on her face and voice which left him utterly in the dark as to how she had taken his information. She was far too much a woman of the world to pretend to any false delicacy. The history of this German girl was only to her a history like many others—folly, sin, betrayal. Her fate did not waken one throb of pity, one thought of compassion; far otherwise, it raised a fierce and savage joy in her breast. It seemed as the sweetness of a revenge which she would long to take for an indignity, an insult, the like of which had never approached her serene and haughty life.

"And I believed in him," she said to herself. "I thought, for once, that I had found truth, honour, single-heartedness; and, after all, he is no greater, no better than any of the fools, who run after a girl's face and allow themselves to be the slaves of their passions."

Her own face grew dark and stormy; her lips set themselves in one hard line; a sudden flame of rage caught her soul, and melted all the icy coldness and indifference on which she had so prided herself—melted it as snow before fire. Her brow flushed, her bosom heaved, the slender stem of the screen in her hand snapped, and shattered, and fell in a score of fragments at her

feet. She to be duped, and tricked, and deceived! She, who had so prided herself on her clear-sightedness, her unerring judgement! She who had cheated her heart with the fancy that this man loved her, and who now, in the very hour of her triumph, learnt that he had all the time been prosecuting a disgraceful amour!

As each moment passed, the bitterness of her shame and the jealous fury of her anger deepened and increased.

For it was jealousy which touched her with its brand of fire—jealousy which for the first time in her life of selfish caprice, dragged her from her high pedestal, and held her bound by the common fetters of common lives.

She was no wiser, no surer, no better treated than any groom's wife or village girl among her own people. She had been so certain that he cared for her—so certain—and now—!

Her fierce Russian blood boiled in her veins and flushed her cheek. She remembered the intercourse of those past months, and every word he had spoken seemed to stand out in letters of flame, and condemn him as base, ignoble, hypocritical; all that she most hated, all that she could least excuse. He had deceived her, even her! Her pride reeled and fell into the dust of secret shame as she confessed it; and as she thought of her own blindness; of the miserable intrigue carried on so skilfully; of a rival, whom her inmost soul despised; of the guilt and horror now heaped upon his life and of him, whom she had once told herself was as a king among men—a man worthy to be loved and trusted with all that was worthiest and best in the heart which he might win.

The pain and the insult maddened her;

yet she sat on there still as any statue, but humiliated as a queen dethroned, a lovely figure, and yet a most miserable one.

She sat on without heed of time; when her maid knocked to ask if she would dress for dinner, she answered impatiently that she had a headache, and would not come down; that she wished to be undisturbed; and her moods were too well known in the household for anyone to venture near her until she should herself summon them.

An hour passed—two hours—three hours—yet she did not move. As the third struck, a faint and timid knock aroused her. She answered it impatiently, almost fiercely. It was her maid again, with a message.

Hearing it through the closed door, she was told that Mr. Lyle was below, and wished to know if he could see her for a few moments on business of the greatest importance.

The girl started to her feet, too amazed and indignant for speech.

"He wished to see Sir Roy," continued the maid; "but he had gone out on hearing that you would not be downstairs that evening. Mr. Lyle, therefore, begged me to ask you to grant him this interview. He would not have asked it, had it not been necessary and of the deepest importance."

Alexis stood there, her hand pressed to her heart, whose wild throbs almost hurt her; her eyes dilated with anger; a fierce, incredulous joy thrilling her veins.

That he should ask for her, seek her presence voluntarily, seemed a thing so strange that she could scarcely credit it. A moment—then she unlocked the door, and bade the maid attend to her fire and alter the shade of the lamp, while she herself swept into the adjoining dressing-room and looked at herself from head to foot with the merciless scrutiny that once before had characterised her personal survey.

All the tumultuous feelings of the past hours had added to, rather than detracted from, her strange beauty. The flush on her cheeks, the feverish brilliance of her eyes, the loosely ruffled hair on her brow, only made her lovelier for the warmth and richness of colouring they lent her usual statue-like calm. She took a deep yellow rose from a vase near at hand, and placed it amidst the laces at her breast, and gave one glance at the graceful, sweeping folds that fell around her like an opal cloud. Then she passed on and entered her boudoir again, calm and proud as a young

queen who gives audience to an erring subject.

"You may bring Mr. Lyle here," she said coldly, and seated herself in the long low chair, to all appearance as calm and indifferent as ever. Her eyes fell on the broken fragments of the screen which she had held, and with a sudden sense of previous disadvantage, she took another from the carved mantel-shelf and laid it on her lap.

"Why does he come?" she asked herself, and the rose in her bosom trembled with its rapid pulsations. "Why? Is it to defend himself? Does he think to fool me again?"

"Mr. Lyle," announced the maid.

Alexis looked up as the door closed on her visitor. What he saw in her face she did not know; but the hand which he had half-extended dropped at his side, and he simply bowed in answer to her cold greeting.

"I am sorry," he said, "to intrude upon you, Miss Kenyon, but the matter is urgent, and Sir Roy is from home. I cannot wait for his return, as I leave here in an hour."

"Indeed," she said curtly. "And what is the urgent matter, Mr. Lyle?"

The blood flushed his pale cheek with momentary warmth. Only now, when he looked on that proud face, when he heard that calm and chilling voice did he realise how difficult his task might be.

"Miss Kenyon," he said hesitatingly, "you told me, on the last occasion of our meeting, that you were engaged to be married to your cousin, Neale. You must have seen that the information affected me strangely."

She slowly opened the screen, and began to wave it to and fro with languid and indifferent grace. That momentary hesitation, that look from his haggard eyes, thrilled her heart anew. Was she to have her triumph, after all?

Seeing that she did not answer, he resumed: "I was affected, indeed—more than that. I received a painful shock at that announcement, for I knew that your cousin must have wantonly deceived you, or that he stood condemned in the sight of all honourable men as a dishonoured scoundrel!"

"My cousin is not here to defend himself," she said coolly, "and I am not accustomed to such very violent language. Perhaps you will give me the reasons for your—abuse?"

"The reasons," he said impetuously,

"are these. When I met him in Venice, he represented himself to me as a married man. When I met him here—months afterwards—he again repeated that statement. I had the honour of knowing the young lady, whom he represented as his wife. To know her was to know and admire purity and beauty of nature and person, in its highest and most perfect form. I did not doubt his word or his honour, and he gave me excellent reasons for his keeping the marriage secret. You may understand, therefore, how amazed I was, when I heard from your own lips that he was engaged to you, and that you were contemplating a speedy union."

He looked at her intently. The screen lay idly in her lap. Her face was calm and unmoved as ever. She languidly adjusted a cushion, and leant back with indolent grace, while her eyes looked up to his with a cynical coldness and disbelief which startled him more even than her words.

"Are you telling me a romance?" she said. "I assure you that it does not interest me at all. I am quite aware of my cousin's little idyl. It is only on a par with all other follies of manly youth. But you, surely, are not so credulous as to believe your version of the tale, or suppose that my cousin would dare to offer me such an insult as your words imply?"

"Do you mean to say," cried Adrian Lyle hoarsely, "that you don't believe what I have told you—that you doubt my word?"

"I mean to say," she answered, quite unmoved, "that I never listen to tales behind any one's back. I am quite aware of this—person's—existence. I am aware also of the part which she has played in my cousin's life and in yours. But the story of the pretended marriage is a piece of folly which I never expected to hear from you; and I marvel not only at your want of good taste in repeating such a story to me, but at your pretence of crediting it yourself."

The words were so contemptuous, so unwomanly, that, as he listened to them, Adrian Lyle felt the very blood tingle in his veins. A dark flush rose to his brow; his eyes flashed back to hers the deepest scorn that ever any man's eyes had dared to give her.

"Miss Kenyon," he said—and there was a ring of power and command in his voice which held her even against her will—"you have offered me the deepest insult that one human being can offer to another. Were

your cousin here at this moment, he would not dare to deny what I have said."

"He is not here," interposed Alexis coolly. "And you have it all your own way, Mr. Lyle. He will soon be back, however, and able to defend himself. I leave it to your own good taste to refrain from further particulars of this not very creditable romance. It has neither interest nor amusement for me, I assure you."

Her eyes met his own with a challenge of defiance. He knew then that all his faith, his honesty, his courage, were impotent to move her, to win her belief, to waken her sympathy; and he felt a fierce anger at himself for having come to her with a tale, at which she only mocked and jeered; with the pathetic story of that broken life which could never interpose itself now between her and the cold caprice that had been its ruin.

Then suddenly his face grew warm. A burning light leaped into his eyes. He crossed the space and stood before her, majestic as an avenging angel, holding her cold and selfish pride checked and silent by the might and strength of conscious truth.

"As truly as there is a Heaven above us," he said solemnly, "you shall hear soon, whether you affect to disbelieve or not, that what I have told you is true—every word of it. Neale Kenyon won this child away from her home by specious promises, all of which he has broken. How could she tell she was deceived? A girl of sixteen, as ignorant of the world and of men as a baby. He has sworn to me that she was his wife. She never doubted it herself—never till the day that brought his letter to you. When I heard what that letter contained, and you confirmed it, I went to her. I found her despairing, heart-broken, all the youth and faith and glory of her life shattered at one cowardly blow—a sight to wring any man's heart, to soften any woman's. I could do nothing. Consolation was not to be found for a calamity so overwhelming—a calamity which her youth and innocence made ten times more pathetic. Long, long ago I promised to be her friend, if ever she should need one; but what could any friend do for her in such an hour of agony? Maddened with despair and grief she has fled from the only home she knew—the home which your cousin provided for his wife, and where she has lived under that name ever since he left for India. I have lost all trace of her. It is three days

since she left her shelter. In her distraught and broken-hearted state, Heaven alone knows what may not be her fate ere now. Then I took the desperate resolve of appealing to you, for as she knows your name, and knows that you are to be Neale Kenyon's wife, it may be that she will find her way here. In any case, you know now the character of the man you are about to wed, and, whether you defy the better impulses of your nature or not, you can no longer accept him in ignorance. I have sworn to befriend this girl at any cost; and if her fate demands it, the world shall know Neale Kenyon's villainy as I know it. Will you at your own risk and peril give your good name into his keeping?"

She sat there quite still and silent beneath the breathless torrent of those passionate words.

As they ceased she slowly rose and confronted him:

"You have told me your version of this story," she said, "now listen to mine. Is it only friendship that has made you so keen a champion of this interesting heroine? Have you indeed played so blameless a part with regard to her and her 'unprotected' condition? What of your own visits to her? Your mysterious absence and illness, when she played the part of ministering angel? What of the rumour which credits you with being the 'Mr. Kenyon' whose personality you are kind enough to foist on to my cousin's shoulders? There are two sides to every tale; I cannot give the verdict to either as yet; but——"

She stopped. The disgust and horror of his face stayed further insults, though she was then in the mood to heap one on another unsparingly.

"I don't know," he said hoarsely, "how you can bring yourself, as a woman, to insinuate facts so disgraceful. They are below contempt. I should scorn myself, did I attempt to answer them or defend one single action which you have so grossly misinterpreted. I see now whom I have to thank for being beforehand with me. Your spy has acquitted himself most creditably, and I congratulate you on having kept his services in the family. Further discussion is needless, I see. Your sex has given you the privilege of insinuating what no man would have dared to do."

A faint smile curved her lips.

"You can be melodramatic out of the pulpit as well as in," she said. "It is a

great art, but you had better reserve its uses for my cousin. It will be interesting to know what he has to say on the matter; and excuse my remarking that it would have been better taste to have kept the subject for his ears, or—my father's."

She bowed coldly as a sign of dismissal.

"You have wilfully misconstrued my motives," he said. "Before I go, will you tell me if you believe that I have spoken the truth of this matter? Leaving future intentions out of the question, I have a right to demand that."

Her eyes dilated. There was the vibration of intense passion, subdued and held in check, but dangerous withal, in her clear, low voice, as she answered:

"If you swore it on the Faith and Order you profess, I would not believe you! A priest is but a man when he loves, and you must think me very blind that I have not discovered your secret ere this."

His face paled to the hues of death. For a moment his heart seemed to stop beating, and he turned sick and dizzy with the overmastering power of long-restrained emotion.

Then he looked at her with one last look of horror and disgust, and left her presence without another word.

She, left alone, listened to the echo of his steps with a strange, feverish delight. "I have hurt him," she cried to herself in a savage, breathless way. "It was all I could do—all I could do. Oh, how I hate that girl! To think that I have let myself be so blind, so deluded, and that all the time it was for her he cared—for her! never for me, never one single moment of his life for me!"

Then she sank down slowly on the soft white furs at her feet, and hid her face in her hands in a sudden, torturing humiliation which filled her soul with horror, the like of which had never yet touched her brilliant, capricious life!

Adrian Lyle had his revenge then, little as he guessed or desired it.

SOUTH AFRICAN SKETCHES.

AN IDYL OF GONG-GONG.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

ABOUT ten days afterwards, as Markwell was working in his claim, assisting his Kaffirs to move a large rock upon which they had just hit, he felt something strike

him on the back, and a pebble dropped beside him. He looked up hastily and saw Stokes standing at the edge of the pit, regarding him with an amused expression.

"Curse your fooling," he exclaimed, "throwing stones like that. Are you drunk already?"

"She's come," replied Stokes, overlooking the imputation thus thrown upon his character.

"Who's come?"

"Maria's come."

"No!" exclaimed Markwell incredulously. "Randall's sister's come?"

"That's so, old man. I saw her just now getting out of the waggon up at his place. I think that Randall would take it friendly like if you'd just go up and offer to help him. I'd go myself, but I've got some stuff I must get through before night."

Markwell put down his pick, which he had been using as a lever, and climbed up to the bank on which Stokes stood.

"This is no lie of yours, is it?" he said.

"No; it's gospel truth."

"All right then; I'll go."

And, leaving his Kaffirs to get on without him as best they could, he strode away along the path to the canteen.

As he drew near, it became evident to him that Stokes had spoken the truth, a lurking doubt as to that gentleman's veracity having still obtruded itself upon him; for, standing in front of the tent, was a white-tilted waggon with its long span of oxen. The Tottie driver was wrestling with a heavy wooden box, which he was endeavouring to extricate from the interior of the waggon, and Markwell addressed himself to him for information.

"Where's the young woman?" he asked, as he helped him to lower the box to the ground.

"Gone inside, baas."

Markwell looked inside the canteen, but the bar was empty, and he could see nothing of the fair arrival. He entered and approached the counter, intending to knock, cough, or attract Randall's attention by some noise, when he heard voices behind the canvas screen which divided the bar from the rear half of the tent. Randall was speaking.

"Now take care you do it all right, and don't go putting your foot in it."

"All right, guv'nor. Don't you excite yourself. I'm all here—I'm Maria," re-

plied a voice that was unknown to Markwell; but which, he concluded, could only be that of the canteen-keeper's sister.

A suppressed chuckle followed this speech, and the two persons continued conversing; while Markwell, either not liking to play the eavesdropper, or, finding himself unable to hear what they were saying—for they were now speaking in lower tones—moved away and stood outside the tent, regarding the stout oxen before him with a critical eye. Presently he heard a slight noise behind him, and, turning round, he saw Randall approaching from behind the screen. The latter nodded to Markwell.

"Maria's come," he said.

"Yes, I thought so, from this caravan outside," replied Markwell. "And I just looked in to see if I could help you in anything."

The proprietors scratched his chin thoughtfully for a moment.

"Well, there ain't anything you can do, thankey. Maria's a bit tired with her journey; you'll see her this evening."

So saying, he once more disappeared behind the screen, and Markwell returned to his claim.

Markwell was somewhat later than usual in going to Randall's bar that night. After taking his customary plunge in the river, he had, from some motive which he could not perhaps have explained even to himself, and although it was not Sunday, put on his other shirt, which he had washed out a day or two before. It was of a rich purple hue, and rejoiced in a luxuriant crop of pockets bursting out all over its front. As he neared the canteen, the confused murmur of voices, and the steady and continued popping of corks, informed him that his friend's stratagem had so far succeeded, and that a large proportion of the inhabitants of Gong-gong had been won from the lures of the black-eyed Malay girl by the superior attractiveness of Miss Randall.

He could not help smiling as he thought of the now deserted condition of the opposition bar-keeper, and congratulated himself upon always having remained one of Randall's most staunch supporters, feeling certain that his sister would make some distinction between her brother's old friends and those of a more recent standing.

The canteen was so crowded when he entered, that it was only with some little difficulty that he succeeded in making his way towards the counter; but a pair of

saucy black eyes, smiling archly at him from behind that obstruction, encouraged him to overcome every obstacle. The saucy eyes were in truth the only good points to be discerned in the countenance of the fair Maria, who, attired in a light cotton dress, was assisting her brother in dispensing drinks. Her complexion was of a red-brown tint, and her skin was not as smooth as it might have been, but this was doubtless due to habitual exposure to sun and air; her mouth, which was rather large, was only redeemed from actual ugliness by the superb white teeth which it enshrined; while her black hair was almost as short as that of a boy, and dotted thickly with numerous little screws of curl-paper. However, to the gentlemen who now filled the tent, and who for many months had not cast eyes upon a white woman, she appeared the personification of female beauty, and they would have indignantly vindicated her charms against those of the Cytherean Venus herself.

Markwell removed his felt hat with a certain awkwardness, as if he had almost forgotten how to make that necessary salutation, and extended his sun-burnt hand towards the fair Maria, who, being informed by Randall that "this was Markwell," shook it warmly and remarked in rather hoarse tones, that she had heard of him from her brother. He endeavoured to mutter his acknowledgements, but, perhaps overcome by the lady's affability, or perhaps ill at ease because he saw Stokes looking at him with a curious smile, he was forced to take shelter behind the bowl of his pipe, and to reinvigorate himself with a "pick-axe," by which designation a fiery mixture of Cape Smoke, Pontac, and ginger beer, was known at the Fields. Later on in the evening, he made some original and interesting remarks upon the state of the weather, which were so smilingly received by the lady, that he was encouraged to continue the conversation; and the fair Maria exhibited such an entire absence of mannerism and affectation, and seemed so much above the ordinary prejudices and little weaknesses of her sex, that when Markwell said "good night," and strode to his tent along the dark and silent path, he thought that she was really one of the nicest young women that it had ever been his fortune to meet.

Before a week had passed, Markwell's attentions to Miss Randall had become so

marked, and his attendance at the canteen of which she was the Hebe was so constant, even at hours during which a popular prejudice had decreed that none but "loafers" could be absent from their claims, that men winked at each other expressively whenever he passed near them, and referred to him with amused grins as "the bridegroom"; while some of the more venturesome among these humourists even went so far as to ask him not to forget them when the wedding came off. These sallies, however, were not received by Markwell with his usual careless indifference. On one or two occasions, he even showed his want of appreciation of the joke by applying various uncomplimentary epithets to the most persistent of the wits, promising also, in case of necessity, to bring physical arguments into play, in order to put a stop to such misplaced humour; and as it was known that he could at need sling an ugly left, the intimation at once had the desired effect.

Miss Randall's conduct, and her motives in encouraging the attentions of her ungainly admirer, were discussed freely and unconventionally by the community. Many of the younger men, perhaps smarting under a feeling that their own merits and personal charms had not been properly appreciated, characterized her behaviour as "indecent" and "disgusting"; but the majority of diggers were of opinion that the young lady was merely amusing herself at the expense of her swain, or, as they graphically termed it, was "just fooling him."

"I saw the old fool risking his precious neck to get her a bit o' pink blossom out o' one of them big trees below the drift," said a confirmed misogynist. "And, just like all wimmen, she'd no sooner got it than she said she didn't want it, and that she hated flowers and such trash."

"He wasted a fine four-carat stone on her the other morning," added another. "He was givin' it to her just as I went into the bar."

Certainly, Markwell had nothing to complain of on the score of coyness in his mistress. Twice she had condescended to go down to the river-side and watch him at work at the sorting table, jumping over the rocks and little pools of water that lay in her way, with an innocent abandon which a more hypercritical society would perhaps have stigmatised as indecorous. It was with a childish delight that she watched her admirer remove tray after tray of glisten-

ing river agates from the cradle; and when she rocked that useful machine for a few moments with her foot, the onlookers at once discovered that the action was but a new development of the maternal instinct.

"She appears to be getting her hand in for the heavy business of marriage," said Italy. "It's the same kind of natural instinct that makes little girls nurse dolls."

Although all these marks of preference were thus lavished upon him, Markwell was not quite easy in his mind. Upon two occasions he had, on entering the canteen, discovered Stokes engaged in an animated conversation with the bewitching Maria. These conversations had been cut short directly he appeared; but on one of the two occasions he had distinctly heard his name mentioned. The coldness with which Miss Randall usually treated Stokes, and the unmistakeable rebuffs which she daily showered upon him, seemed, too, to speak of a dislike so exaggerated, that after a few days Markwell began to suspect that it was merely assumed to disguise a feeling of quite another nature. From that moment he began to hate Stokes, whom he could not help acknowledging to be a most formidable rival, both on account of his fluency of speech and undeniable good looks, and because of his former acquaintance with the young lady in her native town. Relations between the two men began to be somewhat strained, and the spirits of the camp became generally exhilarated at the speedy prospect of a row.

One evening, some three weeks after Miss Randall's arrival in camp, Markwell was horrified, on entering the canteen somewhat earlier than the usual hour, to hear a man's voice behind the canvas partition which was believed by the community to screen the young lady's sleeping apartment from the public gaze, and that voice was not the voice of her brother. Scandalised to the last degree, and with ears quickened by jealousy, he soon recognised the tones as those of his rival; and, with the unbiassed judgement and calm consideration so peculiar to lovers, he at once put the worst construction upon his presence there. His first impulse was to burst upon the guilty pair, and shame them by his sudden apparition; his second, to wait outside for the hated rival and challenge him to mortal combat; but, on third thoughts, he decided to go away quietly to his tent, and deliberate upon his course of action.

Feeling conscious that conversation was not his strong point, and hoping to call into life the dormant germs of poesy which he felt certain that Nature had implanted in him, he had borrowed from Italy, some days previously, a book which the artist had assured him was "brimful of love and such sickly nonsense," intending, if possible, to turn some of the most flattering speeches to his own account. The book was a novel which had been in fashion at the commencement of the present century, at which period, according to the author, people still conversed upon stilts. What he had already read of it, had, he considered, justified a further confidence in its lessons, and to it he now turned for advice in the unpleasant circumstances in which he found himself. In the first chapter, which treated of two murders, an abduction, a secret marriage, and a haunted castle, he had read that when a young lady had suffered her affections to be engrossed by one of the sterner sex, she invariably treated the unfortunate object of her passion with coldness and disdain; while, on the other hand, she lavished her amiability upon some person towards whom she was totally indifferent. Viewed in the light of his recent discovery, how true, how unfailing was this proposition! The fair Maria had overwhelmed him with condescension and encouragement, while she had rarely spoken to Stokes, except to snub him. What a wonderful knowledge of human nature the gifted author of this priceless work must have acquired!

On this evening he hastily turned over the leaves to discover what mode of procedure was recommended for obtaining reparation for injury from a rival. He was unable to find a case exactly parallel with his own; but he read that, when rival suitors for a fair damsel's hand chanced to meet, they addressed each other in stilted phrases and with strange oaths, and finally endeavoured to introduce several feet of cold steel to each other. He pondered long over this, wondering if it would be practicable for him to remove Stokes from the scene of action in this manner. He was obliged to decide that it was impossible. In the first place he had no sword, and he doubted whether a revolver or sheath knife could be used with propriety in such cases. In the second place, he remembered that in these degenerate days, should he chance to be the victor in the combat, an unpoetical judge and a matter-of-fact

hangman would probably demand his attention to matters totally foreign to the original subject. While still thinking this over, the remnant of his candle disappeared with a hissing noise and much smoke into the interior of the bottle which did duty as candlestick; and he fell asleep to dream that an enormous eel, with the head and shoulders of Mr. Stokes, kept waltzing gracefully before him on its tail, while he made frantic but ineffectual efforts to slay it with a jewelled-hilted rapier.

He was awakened by some hard substance coming forcibly in contact with his ribs, and, opening his eyes, he perceived that the sun had risen, and that Stokes was standing over him, stirring him up with the toe of one of his formidable boots.

Half awake, and still confused by his dream, he sprang to his feet.

"I've got something to tell you," said Stokes, seating himself on the end of an empty brandy case.

This was said so lugubriously, and the man's appearance was so sad and downcast, that Markwell at once divined that something of importance had occurred; perhaps that the outraged Randall had demanded satisfaction for the injury done to his sister's fair fame, and he prepared himself to be as dignified and as sarcastic as possible.

Stokes sighed.

"I'm going to leave the camp to-day," he said, wiping his bronzed face with his shirt-sleeve, as if to conceal his emotion. "I've played the bold game, and I've lost. This ain't no place for me now."

Markwell made no remark, and the speaker continued:

"It's a queer come-down for me. I've always laughed at wimmen and gals, and never troubled my head about them; and now to go such a reg'lar mucker over a bit of a gal like that, and to be told fair and square to clear out."

"Who's told you to clear out?"

"Maria."

A few moments of dead silence followed this disclosure, during which Stokes gazed sorrowfully down at his boots.

"I loved that gal, Jimmy," he said, presently. "So help me, I loved that gal better than I ever thought to have cared for anything in a petticoat. You and me was old friends," he continued, stretching out his hand and resting it on his companion's shoulder, "yet, all along o' that gal, we've been getting cool and nearly

quarrelling. But I didn't care a bit for that—friends, fun, licker—all was as nothin' to me compared with that gal."

Markwell took his friend's hand and wrung it silently.

"'Twas only last night," went on the disconsolate Stokes, "I said to myself I'll play the plucky game, and I went up there private like, and straight out asked her to marry me. . . . She said 'No,' she couldn't. I felt just mad, and I asked her, 'Why not?' Says she, 'You're no gentleman, Mr. Stokes, or you'd take your answer and go.' I says, 'Maria, just tell me this. Is there any one in camp you like better nor me? Just tell me that, so that I can lay round for him with a club?' 'Ho,' says she, with her eyes flashin', 'and that's what you call love, Mr. Stokes, is it? You love me so much that you want to make me unhappy by killing the man I'm fond of.' I swore I wouldn't do no such thing, that I was wild, and didn't know what I was saying, and I asked her again to tell me the man. Says she, 'His name begins with a M.' I says, 'It's Jimmy Markwell;' and she says, 'I ain't agoing to deny it.' . . . Jimmy, I felt bad, though I might have guessed that you would be the happy man. I thought that in the night I'd come down here, and then we'd see who was the best man. But then I thought again, what good would that do me? She'd never have me. So the long and short of it is, I'm going down to the Rush—I can't stay here now, and I just came to tell you all about it, and make friends again."

Markwell seized his visitor's hand, and wrung it until the tears came into his eyes.

"Say no more, say no more," he ejaculated. "I'm sorry for you, old chap! Let's go and licker."

On their way to the canteen Markwell confided to Stokes his suspicions of the previous night.

"You must have just reached there as I was proposin'," said the latter. "I asked her if I might just step behind for a minute."

Relieved by this simple explanation, Markwell went on to tell him how his worst fears had been seemingly confirmed by the authority of the novel. His companion treated with ridicule its dogma as to the manner in which young ladies usually behaved to secretly-favoured lovers.

"It's a set of lies," he said, contemptuously. "Chuck the dratted thing away."

The two men entered Randall's tent arm-in-arm. The fair Maria received them with a certain amount of uneasiness. Markwell thought that her red-brown cheek was suffused with a deeper tint, when she perceived in whose company he was; and from this he surmised that she had, with the intuitive perception of her sex, already guessed that Stokes had violated her confidence.

Each man swallowed his drink in solemn silence, and Maria occupied herself in attempting to wipe the tumblers, left by the revellers of the past night, with a cloth of doubtful cleanliness. While she was thus employed, Stokes seized the opportunity to advise Markwell to press his suit.

"Go in and win, old man," he whispered. "Now's your time. I'm going off to get my few traps together, and you'll have her all to yourself. It's too early for anyone to come up here from the claims yet."

So saying, he once more wrung his companion's hand and strode out of the tent.

Left to himself, Markwell determined not to waste any precious time, but to come to the point at once.

"Maria," he said, "I'm a plain man, and I like plain speaking. I've had my fling in my time, and I've known wimmin and their ways more than has, perhaps, been good for me. Still, I've gained experience by that, and I know now how to tell an honest and straightforward gal from a flighty one. So what I have to say is this. If you'll take me I'll make you a good husband, and you shall never have a cross word or blow from me as long as you live."

Miss Randall had laid down the glass-cloth, and was gazing at the speaker with eyes wide open with amazement.

"As for position, I've got a little bit of land down at Durban, and this," continued Markwell, taking a small tin box from his pocket, and pouring a glittering little cascade of diamonds from hand to hand. "We shan't want, and I'm sure you'll never be sorry for marrying me."

He looked up as he concluded his speech, just in time to see Miss Randall disappearing behind the canvas screen; and next moment a hysterical sound, which he feared sounded strangely like suppressed laughter, broke upon his ear.

"Perhaps I was too hasty," he murmured, as with a trembling hand he nervously tried to fix the lid upon his tin box and restore that to his pocket. "Anyhow, I'll wait here till I get an answer."

In a few seconds Randall appeared from behind the partition. He looked curiously at Markwell.

"What's this you've been saying to Maria?" he inquired.

"Nothing that I need be ashamed of, or that you need get riled about. I've asked Maria to be my wife."

Randall appeared annoyed.

"You've made a pretty mess of it, you have," he said.

"How?"

"Maria ain't my sister at all."

"Not your sister? What is she then? Your wife, I s'pose. But of all the mean plants, to go passing her off as your sister——! It's playing it pretty low down on this camp, and on me particularly."

"Go slow, go slow," interrupted Randall; "there's no such hurry. She ain't my wife nor sweetheart either."

"Then what in thunder is she?"

"Just this—she's my young brother. You see how it was," he went on hastily. "There was that fellow Cobb drawing every idle fool up to his place with his Malay gal. You may remember you advised me to bring up a white one. Well, I hadn't any sisters. I didn't know whom to get; so I got my young brother to come up from Hopetown, dressed as a gal. And he came, and he's Maria. That's all."

"Oh, that's all, is it?"

"Yes, that's all. And now Cobb's gone. He went off last night, clean broke, so we're not going to keep the game up any longer; but nobody knows about this mistake of yours except us three, and you may depend it shan't go no further. You've always stuck to me, and now I'll stick to you. All the other chaps were taken in just the same as you, except Stokes. He knew all about it, of course."

"Oh! he knew, did he? Hang him," said Markwell, nervously turning to the door.

"Yes. He knew. He's a Hopetown man, same as myself."

"And it won't go any further, you think. Just look over there and you'll see."

And Markwell pointed out of the tent door to a group of diggers standing away down on the river-bank. In the midst of them, Stokes was distinctly visible; and to judge from the shouts of laughter and the convulsive movements of the men surrounding him, he was apparently making some amusing communication to them.

"There he is," said the unfortunate digger, savagely. "He put me up to the whole thing this very morning, and now he's fooling me to the whole camp."

As he spoke, the group below moved away from the river, and struck into the path leading to Randall's canteen.

"They're coming up here," said the manager of that establishment, "and I guess you're in no hurry to meet them. You can go out by the back door, they won't see you then." And he led Markwell behind the screen to the back of the tent, where a narrow path led through the acacia scrub up to the plateau behind.

He had hardly disappeared amongst the bushes when a noisy, shouting, and laughing crowd rushed into the bar, asking for Markwell; and, upon Randall assuring them that he had left some little time before, they proceeded in a body to his tent, and then to his claim; but finding him at neither of those places, they decided to wait until evening for their amusement.

Evening came, and night, and the next morning, but Markwell appeared not; and the general opinion was that he dared not face the laughter of the entire camp, and had gone to try his luck at dry diggings. Three days later, however, as Italy was wandering about with a gun in the scrub about a mile below camp, looking out for a shot at a pouw or a buck, he suddenly disturbed a number of vultures, who were engaged in their usual loathsome task. Naturally imagining the prey to be the carcase of an ox or a mule, he was about to turn aside when a long digger's boot caught his eye, and he saw the half-devoured remains of a man, lying stretched on his back. The torn fingers were still grasping a revolver, and the unhappy man had died by his own hand. It was Markwell.

A REVIEW OF DOGS.

UNDER the shade of the elms of Barnes, within the ancient park which still holds gallantly out against the ever-advancing battalions of bricks and mortar, even with the July heat a meeting of some two thousand dogs passed off very pleasantly. In a general way, the fancy of a dog fancier is strictly specialised and limited. The lover of Bull-dogs has no interest in Clumber Spaniels; the breeder of Setters looks superciliously on Collies; while the patron of Pugs has

nothing to say to the honest Scotch Terrier. But, for once in a way, under the auspices of the Kennel Club, we had a general gathering of typical specimens of nearly all classes of dogs. The huge Plinlimmon was there, that chief among St. Bernards, perhaps the biggest and handsomest of his kind ever seen; while, at the other end of the show, you might see a proud exhibitor holding out his diminutive Toy on the palm of one hand, while he diligently brushed and combed its silken coat with the other. If we had lost touch of the dogs of the day, and had gone on worshipping old favourites out of date and old-fashioned, here was the place to bring us to a level with existing circumstances; while it was also encouraging to remark that, in spite of the caprices of fashion, plenty of the old stock are still left, and that whole classes of dogs have gone on increasing and flourishing, quite unconscious of having been deserted by public favour.

Here were Bloodhounds, still heading the catalogue by right of ancient descent and former honour; but either our ideas have become enlarged, or the Bloodhound of to-day is not the formidable creature he was of old. This surely is not the dog that brought the Bruce to bay, nor these the creatures that, according to "Enfield's Speaker," "hunted down the unfortunate natives of Mexico." Yet these dogs are highly valued by their owners; and there is a lady dog among them that her owner modestly offers to part with for the sum of a million.

Those famous old-fashioned, shaggy Otter-hounds are getting scarce, too, and highly valued. There were only two in the show, and, perhaps the owner of the brace was reasonable enough in offering one of these for ten thousand pounds.

The old English Mastiff has still a strong phalanx of admirers, but careful breeding has developed rather symmetry than size. "The Mastive or Bandogge," described by Caius in his treatise of "Englishe Dogges," was more of a mongrel, probably, "terrible and frightful to behold, and more fierce and fell than any Arcadian Curra." These dogs were generally tawny probably, as they are "said to have their generation of the violent Lion;" but the colour most in favour at the present day is rather fawn or mouse. The monks of old may be credited with having favoured the English Mastiff. Men of peace, with much treasure often in their

keeping, the monks reared great dogs as guards, and no doubt took much interest in their faithful friends and companions. The white Mastiffs of Delacres Abbey, in Staffordshire, were noted in their time, and the subject of sundry curious legends.

The grandest and most favourite dog of the present day we also owe to the monks of more recent times. The St. Bernard, whose home is the monastery among the Alpine passes, is certainly the most popular dog of the present day, as witness the crowds of admirers who press about Plinlimmon. The noble dog seems to be admirable in temper as in all other points, but receives the caresses of his admirers with the calm indifference of a Royal personage. But he thoroughly understands the ways of a show, and the sight of the feeder on his rounds gives a certain animation to his expressive face.

The popularity of the St. Bernard has put rather in the shade the old favourite, the Newfoundland. When Landseer was in his prime, what dog received more applause than his "Member of the Royal Humane Society?" Landseer's dog was black and white; but the colour "de rigueur" in a Newfoundland is black, only a white star being allowed on the breast, in exchange for the old-fashioned, handsome shirt-front.

But all our big dogs alike were threatened by the Great Dane, which in appearance resembles a poacher's mongrel dog, but on a vastly grander scale. The dog, however, has a strong phalanx of supporters, and at our typical dog show, as many entries appeared of Great Danes as of the once paramount Saint Bernards—about a hundred and thirty dogs of each kind being present on the benches of this canine parliament. The Great Dane is, in fact, the German Boarhound. It is so long since we in England had the privilege of hunting wild boars, wolves, and such cattle, that we possess no distinctive breed devoted to their capture. The rough, shaggy, Otterhound, now almost superseded in his own particular sport, is perhaps a sole representative of the dog accustomed to the pursuit of ferocious beasts. But Ireland had wolves until more recent times, and the Irish Wolfhound is still in existence.

There is no essential difference between the Wolfhound and the Deerhound, except that the latter is finer, and more speedy. The Deerhound was another favourite of Landseer's, and suggests pictures of hills covered with heather and deer-stalkers crouching thereon with the hounds

straining at their leash. Dr. Caius seems to allude to the Deerhound as the Gaze-hound, so called because he hunts by sight and not by scent; and he also describes the Greyhound fully, although he does not account for the name, which can hardly be derived from the colour of the animal.

As we are now in the domain of sporting dogs, we find the old English Pointer still a favourite show animal, although his employment in the field is now much restricted. You have probably hitherto imagined the Griffon to be a fabulous beast; the best available French dictionary declares it so to be; but Griffons appear at the dog show, and prove to be nothing more formidable than a rough-coated variety of Pointer, all of which Griffons hail from Holland or Belgium. The Setter is a dog of English blood, and is mentioned by Caius among the "gentle dogges serving the hawks." But the red or Irish Setter seems to be a distinct variety, probably of Celtic origin. One of the most ancient poems of Wales, attributed to a native Prince, describes

Ystec, my dog, that is well trained;
Dormarhedd, with the brown nose,
That ranges with a serpent's motion—

a description which suggests vividly enough the motion of a Setter at work in the field. The Retriever is a more modern cross, with something of the Setter and Newfoundland in his composition, and is aptly divided into wavy-coated and curly-coated varieties.

The old English kennels contained also a hound, known, according to Caius, as the Leviner or Lymmer, the Limehound of later writers; and the same author describes a strange kind of dog called the Tumbler, which by his antics and acrobatic feats, disarmed the natural suspicions of his quarry, and was thus able to approach within snatching distance. This grotesque kind of beast was perhaps a near approach to the German Dachshund, the Badgerhound of our Teutonic kinsmen, a breed lately come into favour as domestic pets.

The pretty, merry Beagle, whose voice in full cry was so tuneable, is no longer in much demand; but a French breed of dog, which somewhat suggests the Beagle, called the Basset-hound, is a likely candidate for admission to fashionable society. He is a handsome miniature hound with long silken ears, and the shortest of legs splayed outwards in a charmingly grotesque manner.

The shepherd's hounds include the faithful but troublesome Collie, and the smooth-coated Welsh dog, not nearly so handsome,

but more useful to the shepherd. There are Bobtails, too, one is glad to see, for the old-fashioned Bobtail is not often met with in these days.

The spotted Dalmatians never appeal much to popular sympathies, mere appendages to a carriage and pair as they are generally considered; nor is the Pomeranian a general favourite, though there are people to be found who love him exceedingly. But the Poodle is a charming dog; and a black one, well shaved and trimmed, is quite a picture of a kind. But, alas! the Black Poodle's reign of fashion is now over—he is no longer the necessary adjunct of beauty in the Park, he occupies no more the favoured cushion in the boudoir.

Fashion may chop and change, but the Bulldog always holds his own. The Bulldog is, no doubt, descended from the Mastiff, for the dogs engaged in the old and barbarous sports of bull and bear baiting were rather Mastiffs than the breed now known as Bulldogs.

The Bull Terrier, too, has enthusiastic admirers—in the Midlands especially—and for people who love to see smaller animals killed expeditiously, he is an unexceptionable pet. But a rough-coated Bull Terrier, such as the Airedale, has also its fanciers, who value their animals at fifties and hundreds of pounds.

A greater contrast cannot be imagined than that between the ugly and indomitable race of Bulldogs and the graceful and timid Spaniel. From Spain comes the Spaniel, no doubt, as his name denotes; but the most beautiful of all the Spaniels comes from France, the original pair having, it is said, been given to the Duke of Newcastle by the Duc de Noailles; and at Clumber, the lovely seat of the Clintons, in Sherwood Forest, the breed was long jealously preserved.

A nice dog, too, is the brisk little Cocker, familiar in the sporting prints of the early years of this century, when the tall hat, green coat, and spatterdashes were accompanied by the single-barrelled fowling-pieces of the flint-lock type.

The Fox Terrier is alike popular both as a sporting and a fancy dog. He is not so called as being the offspring of the cross between fox and dog, although such alliances are not unknown. Caius even enumerates three classes of dogs, the products of crosses with wild animals. In one, the sire is a wolf; in the next, a fox; and in the third, the sire is a bandog and

the mother a bear. And this raises the question as to the origin of the dog, which has been generally ascribed to both wolf and fox; but the geological record points to the existence of a distinct species of wild dog existing concurrently with his cruel and crafty cousins. To return to the Fox Terrier, who alone of his "confères" justifies their common name, "Terrars, because they creep into the grounds," as Caius hath it. The Fox Terrier, employed to bolt the fox from his earth when, hotly pursued, he has gained that place of refuge, is a more rough-and-ready customer than the elegant little dogs which find their places in a show; but the popularity of the breed, with both gentle and simple, may be judged by the fact that, in our typical show, more than two hundred and fifty entries of Fox Terriers were made, far exceeding that of any other class. Indeed, as a companion, the Fox Terrier is difficult to beat, and his knowing air and confidential manner attract the affection of the most obdurate.

To many it will be a novelty to find that Wales and Ireland both produce a distinct race of Terriers, which present, however, no striking points of difference with the wiry Scotch. And of the Terriers formerly known as Scotch, a more critical age has established sundry classes which hail from this side of the Border. There is the Bedlington, for instance, which resembles the Dandie much as his Northumbrian master resembles a Scot; and the Yorkshire Terrier, with long, silky coat, a favourite companion of the youths and maidens of the earlier years of the present reign, and then often loosely termed a "Skye." It is this kind of small, long-haired dog, whether Yorkshire or "Skye," that is fiercely apostrophised by Curtius, in whose days it seems to have been a novelty. "Iseland dogges, curled and rough all over, showing neither face nor body, a beggarly beast, brought out of barbarous borders."

Delightful are the Dandie Dinmonts, affectionate, intelligent, and courageous—the Peppers especially, the Mustard variety seems to want flavour—happy, too, in their association with Sir Walter Scott's finest touches. The Skyes, too, will always claim respect, although fallen out of fashion. The breed, by the way, still exists upon the Island of Skye; but finer specimens are in the hands of the fanciers. Then there are Clydesdale Terriers, with the general

features of the generic Scotch; and the inevitable black-and-tan, sometimes called English, but which seems to belong exclusively to no particular clime or realm. The Schipperkes, familiarly called Skips, are, perhaps, the latest development of the Terrier fancy, and these hail from Belgium; but of their origin no man knows.

The passion for Pugs is now a matter of history, and yet there exists a Pug Club, flourishing and well supported. And to come to the "delicate, neate, and pretty kind of dogges called the Spaniel gentle," beginning with the Maltese, which are more properly Spaniels than Terriers, and which, according to Caius, were the originals of these Toy dogs: "Malta, an iseland, indeed famous and renowned, where this kind of dogge had their principal beginning."

Then come King Charles Spaniels, the favourite breed of the Merry Monarch, which are scarce enough now; as are Blenheims, originally introduced to this country by the great Duke of Marlborough. These are dogs that have had their day, and yet are highly valued by their particular fanciers.

Then, there are Tricolours and Rubies, which are valued far above rubies by their breeders, the champion of the class being priced at two thousand pounds, while a pint mug would make a commodious kennel for the little animal.

Italian Greyhounds and Toy Terriers vie with each other in diminutive fragility. Anxious exhibitors are at hand with coats and wraps, to muffle up their little charges, at the slightest sign of a change of temperature.

Such are the tribes of dogs, as represented in the general show of the Kennel Club. There are more than fifteen other Clubs which make a specialty of some particular breed; hold their shows; offer prizes and cups; but the Kennel Club, like the Jockey Club in racing matters, propounds its code of laws, which is generally adopted by the subsidiary meetings.

Foxhounds have their own particular world, and being bred for use in the field and not for show, do not come within the scope of the fancy. Dogs, too, are bred for fighting, as well as for racing; but these are out of the pale of dogs of pedigree and condition. With these exceptions, the race of English dogs is here presented, with tolerable completeness, at one coup d'œil.

"YOU MUST NOT COUNT YOUR CHICKENS BEFORE THEY ARE HATCHED."

To the heart of the man void of imagination, there are few maxims dearer than the one above written. With such a one, it holds equal rank with the aphorism, that it is well to call a spade a spade, and other such utterances of the uncompromising spirit of what is called plain common-sense. Many times have I heard it from the mouth of my old friend Crocker, when he happened to be in his most truculent mood; and perhaps I shall not be saying too much, if I declare that it contains within its limits no small portion of the Crockerian system of philosophy. In using the above rather imposing-looking phrase, I do not wish to elevate Crocker to the rank of the founder of a system. When I dealt specially with him in a former paper,* I only intended to hold him up as a type, a type abundant, it is true, in Crocker's own social class, but to be found readily enough in a slightly altered form amongst very superior persons indeed. Many gallant officers I have known, both naval and military, who have called spades—spades with the greatest assiduity; and even Church dignitaries and University professors are sometimes strangers to anything like a flight of fancy. The want of imagination is no special heritage of any particular caste.

I have often observed that men who have acquired the habit of tricking out their speech with maxims, and thus give to their utterances a point, which they certainly would not possess in their original simplicity, are prone to lose all concern with the spirit of the proverb, and content themselves with looking a little wiser than usual as the sentence rolls off the tongue. They are quite satisfied with the sound of authority given by the form of words; and so, as a rule, are the persons whom they address. Thus the practice has grown very dear to them, and this is not to be wondered at; for assuredly they might search far before they could find another so convenient and easy a method of acquiring a reputation for wisdom. If anyone so inclined should read my discursive remarks on this subject, he will, I

* See ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, vol. xl. p. 447.

fear, lift up his heel against me as an iconoclastic nuisance—that is, if he thinks me worth his resentment. In any case, I don't suppose for a moment that I should convince him of his error. I have certain little pet beliefs of my own, points of faith to which I hold on grimly with persistent teeth and claws, for no other reason than that my life is made happier by giving them credit. They have one and all been destroyed, and pulverised over and over again by sympathetic friends, careful of my reputation as a thinker, and by the anonymous teachers of the weekly and monthly reviews; but they are as lively to-day as they were at the moment when they first won the assent of my reasoning faculties. The steadfast believer in the use of maxims as adornments of discourse, occupies exactly the same ground as I do myself; and he will, if I understand anything of human nature, persevere in his beliefs in spite of my puny onslaughts against his favourite weakness.

A good part of this confidence in the wisdom and validity of a particular maxim, arises from a disinclination or inability to investigate, or observe, what would be the consequences of its universal application. The maxim is at first very often picked up haphazard. It is discovered in the pages of a favourite writer, or in the mouth of a revered friend. It strikes the fancy of the finder at first, and is at once adopted as a leading article of his not very extensive mental stock-in-trade.

Thus men who have been unlucky enough to adopt the maxim, upon which I am now making war, as a leading truth, go through the world without knowing anything of the delights of castle-building, which is merely another form of chicken-counting, so anything like a prohibition, supposing such an event to be possible, would strike them but lightly; but just consider, O reader, what would be the consequences for you and me—for I assume from your present occupation that you are a person gifted with imagination and a fine literary taste. Just try and realise what life would be like, if it were declared to be an indictable offence to take refuge from the worry and turmoil of the world in the pleasant land of dreams, whether they be of the castle-building or chicken-counting order. "It's all sheer waste of time, and what can you expect from a man who is always letting his wits run wool gathering!" Such is the judgement of the practical man. Practical,

forsooth! So is the ostrich practical, when it executes that strange head-burying operation described in the natural history books of my youth.

The practical man is earnest in his struggle for bread, and for the divers toothsome accessories with which it seems good to him that his table should be furnished in addition to the staff of life; but how prone he is to forget that man does not live by bread alone! The body, well developed and healthily nourished, is indeed the groundwork of a happy existence; but the mind, even of the practical man, must have some method of occupation in those moments of unbending, which are plentiful even in the severest struggle with the world; and how can it disport itself so harmlessly as in drawing and colouring some fair picture of gratified desire in the not very distant future, or in bringing to a triumphant conclusion some matter of business, as yet perhaps only just set going and not prospering overmuch. So seductive does this recreation seem to me that I am quite unable to believe that any man, even though he be as unimaginative as Crocker himself, can altogether resist its charm. Perhaps the practical man, in his hours of unbending, counts his chickens without knowing how or why, just as I have seen in Continental cities the withered old peasant women mumbling their prayers and counting their beads in the Cathedral, while their thoughts were evidently bent upon the basket of eggs and onions at their feet, in speculation as to how many coins it might bring in the market outside. As he surveys the shop windows of Oxford Street from the top of the morning omnibus, or puffs the evening tobacco after the labours of the City, does the practical man never count chickens like other weak mortals? To me it seems almost inevitable that he should now figure to himself a successful transaction in tallow or moist sugar to be negotiated before the end of the day, and now plan between the whiffs of smoke the construction of a "corner" in one or other of the necessities of life which shall, if the pot be put to boil judiciously, bring him a fortune sudden and ample. No doubt he would be better employed if he were to seek complete mental change in the perusal of my last new novel; but if he finds pleasure in his reflections, though they do smell of the shop, who shall blame him? Only let him take care not to be so hard upon chicken-counting in the future.

Since I have been considering the bearings of this maxim, I have often found diversion in speculating as to the particular form of chicken-counting which this or that of the men I know would be likely to indulge in; for they all do it, whether they be practical men of the deepest dye, or mere wool-gatherers like myself. I have also wormed myself into the confidence of some of my friends with the view of learning their own particular lines, and I feel I cannot do better than set down here the result of some of my investigations.

From what I have discovered, I have no hesitation in saying that there is no such a thing as forecasting a man's ideals from any circumstances which one may know about his tastes or condition. I will begin with my friend Livelings, who, for the last fifteen years, has been doctoring the bodies of his fellow men in a not very opulent suburb, which contains within its limits many large industrial establishments, such as gas-works, brick-fields, market-gardens, and other places of business, grouped round a canal basin. The capitalists connected with these undertakings prudently live elsewhere, so they know nothing of Dr. Livelings and his works; but, on the other hand, Dr. Livelings knows enough, and perhaps more than enough, about their workmen, and their workmen's wives and children. Whether they grow as rich as the social Democrats declare they do in the exploitation of their working brethren, I know not; I only know that Dr. Livelings has not grown rich in the medication of the same. I know nothing indeed of the secrets of his exchequer; but I am ready to hazard a guess that, during the last fifteen years, his wages, considered in relation to his hours of labour, have been beggarly indeed. Nine Hours' Bills, Workshop Regulation Bills, were not drawn and passed into law to meet cases like his. Livelings is a servant of the public, and he has to get to work whenever his master calls, even though he may call at midnight, when it is snowing hard. Should he, according to the estimate of those summoning him, delay overmuch in ministering to the bloody nose of an Irishman who has come to grief in a fight in Wragg's Buildings; or to the bruised head of a cabman a little the worse for liquor, who has fallen from his seat in the course of an exciting midnight race; the grateful and enlightened populace will probably smash his windows, and possibly do him bodily harm when he at last appears.

He is a bachelor, and his house—nice and well-ordered as it is—is bare and unsympathetic from the lack of that indefinable something which the presence of a woman always gives. It wears an aspect of prim neatness under the hands of his excellent housekeeper, Mrs. Hardman, which I would gladly see give place to a certain amount of wifely disorder. There is an air of chill though disciplined neglect over every part of it save over the one room which serves for refectory, library, smoking-room, and all; for Livelings found it impossible, when setting up as a householder, to shake off the old lodging-house habit and march formally from his dinner to another room, to take a spell of ease over his pipe and newspaper. The arm-chairs in the chimney-corners are comfortable and roomy; there are books and pipes and tobacco close at hand; and last, but by no means least, there is a hearty welcome for me whenever I may look in for an evening chat.

Though my friend's life is assuredly not an unhappy one, it is not so unduly full of content, I am certain, as to restrain him from castle-building and chicken-counting whenever he gets half-an-hour's rest with his pipe, and his slippers, and his old coat. He is not the man to wear his heart upon his sleeve; but with a very little trouble I succeeded in getting at the drift of his aspirations; and in what direction, think you, is the idea of his life to be found? In a stately house in Harley Street, with the waiting-room crammed every morning with double-fee patients; with a writing-table strewn with notes of invitation bidding him to the tables of the great, which he answers promptly in the affirmative, except when he may be busy with that paper which the College of Physicians is languishing to hear?

No; emphatically no! Livelings is no scorner of the good things of the world; but he yearneth not after such a reward as the one above depicted. I don't believe he would, under any circumstances, exchange Matilda Crescent for Harley Street, without a sigh. His house is quite good enough for his requirements; and if he could but add to its furniture the one ornament after which his soul hungers, it would seem a very palace of delights. Life, he often tells himself, is a starved, dull affair, to a man who, after a day spent in fighting the grisly forces of disease and evil, comes home to a blank fireside, and meets there no word of sympathy or cheer-

fulness to drive out of his ears the sound of querulous ingratitude with which they pretty surely will have been assailed during the day.

Then his thoughts will wander down to a Worcestershire Vicarage, and he will smile a little sadly as he surveys, in a mental picture, a bright little woman, working like a slave to smooth the way for the failing footsteps of her old father, and to stretch out the income of a hundred and ninety pounds a year, so that it may yield a margin for comforts for the old man. A pang shoots through Livingel's heart as he remembers how largely these comforts must be furnished by the curtailment of the daughter's necessities; and he wishes with all his heart that he might be allowed to give his mite in aid; but pride, he knows well, bars the way. A Stilton cheese at Christmas is the only offering he has ever dared to make. Once he was sorely tempted to add a York ham; but he remembered that the grazing of swine formed a part of the domestic economy of the Vicarage, so that he refrained, fearing that his gift might not partake sufficiently of the nature of a luxury. He writes a letter to the Vicar to announce the dispatch of the Stilton cheese; and to this an answer always comes, in a lady's handwriting, saying how delighted papa is with Doctor Livingel's kind present. He is just now busy with his sermon, and hopes that the Doctor will not take it amiss that he has got his little secretary to answer it. In reply to this Livingel writes again to the Vicarage, the letter not being addressed to the Vicar on this occasion; so, perhaps he does take it amiss. What do you think, candid reader?

When he is in his more sanguine moods, I have a notion that Livingel must anticipate the season when a new Vicar shall minister in the place of the life-weary old man down in Worcestershire, and a brisk and happy companion shall sit on the other side of the hearth-rug. He must foresee that when this event comes to pass, a few flowers will sometimes shed brightness about the dingy rooms; that he will hear now and then some old favourite songs of his sung by a pretty little voice, true and clear as a bell still, in spite of a prolonged struggle against the fearsome Midland accent in the village choir; and—for my friend is but a failing mortal after all—that the breakfast menu may no longer be limited to three strips of

bacon; and that the supper may now and then show a variation from the cold joint of the midday dinner, hacked and hewn during its sojourn in the kitchen regions.

This I gathered was the favourite prospect of my good friend, and it proves that his castle-building was not on a very ambitious scale. Whether he will be wise in carrying out his design is a matter I am not competent to decide. If Septimus Livingel were made of sterner stuff, and could refuse to work without wages, the case would be altered; but I am well-nigh certain that there are continual migrations from the paying to the gratis list of his patients; and I leave it to family folk to determine whether, under such conditions, a man is justified in assuming fresh responsibilities.

But supposing he never gets any further. Livingel has had the pleasure of counting his chickens, and if this process has given a moment's pleasure to so good a man, I maintain it has served a righteous purpose. Shame on the churlish maxim that would discountenance it! I would as soon throw that old briar pipe of my friend's into the fire, and smash that battered brown tobacco-jar, as say a word in disparagement of the practice in Livingel's hearing.

There are others of my friends who hanker after a future still more seemingly inconsistent with their present than Livingel's chicken-counting is, when one meditates as to the natural ambitions of the general practitioner. There is my friend De Burgh, who now fills the post of secretary to a learned society. In official hours he is learned enough himself, and to hear him discourse one would fancy that he would construct for himself a future time of leisure, in which the lighter treatment of some exact science would furnish the principal charm; but no. From what he has told me I have discovered that his dream of happiness is a snug little house in some remote county with half-a-dozen acres of land attached thereto, in the cultivation of which he may test the accuracy of the facts set forth in those interesting shilling hand-books, which profess to teach one how to make five pounds a year out of bees, and ten pounds out of poultry, and twenty out of a cow, and thirty out of pigs, and so on. Of course there are men who never get out of the groove in which they are first set running, men like the croupiers at Wiesbaden, in the old gambling days, who used to spend their holiday punting at

Homburg. These, perhaps, may be the rule, but my friend De Burgh is one of a large class of exceptions.

It is sad to have to admit that this practice, productive of so much innocent enjoyment when moderately indulged in, is sometimes pushed to excess with disastrous consequences. Some there are who count their unhatched chicks with such a lively faith in a successful incubation that the smallest deficiency in the produce, compared with the estimate, will plunge them into the deepest melancholy and despair; but then these are people who attempt to realise the future not for consolation, but out of sheer restlessness. I know a very charming lady, one who has apparently every good gift that fortune can bestow, who is a striking instance of this form of intemperance. I used to think that for her the present must be so full of delights as to render all chicken-counting unnecessary; but it is not so. She is always at it; and, if her desires be in any way within reason, her means would admit of their being gratified to the full, but failure always seems to creep in. Let the harmony sounding in her ears be ever so sweet, there will certainly be one jarring chord. The cunningly woven web displayed to her eyes will have some faulty thread, some discord of colour. The present, however carefully it may have been prepared, is never quite what it should have been, and, more often than not, a grievous disappointment. The chicks are puny and weak, and very likely half the eggs are addled. She draws her eyes away in distaste and sets to work to fashion another future, foreordained surely to turn out just as great a failure as that which has just been merged in the past.

My friend—we will call her Mrs. Auriol—whenever she gives one an account of her present circumstances, never fails to introduce the qualifying “but” as soon as she has finished putting in the brighter tones of the picture. If I praise her house and garden, or the good looks and accomplishments of her eldest son, or her last bit of bric-à-brac, I know well enough that she will, at first, meet my remarks with a languid, melancholy assent and immediately after the warning “but,” proceed to treat me to a long catalogue of woes, concerning the troubles and cares of house-keeping, the wickedness of builders and gardeners, and the deceitfulness of servants; concerning certain untoward tendencies towards billiards and cigars, which have lately

appeared to show that the shades of the prison-house are closing round the head of Master Gustavus; and concerning a report by an expert that her last Japanese bronze is nothing else than an ingenious fabrication from Hamburg.

Now that I know Mrs. Auriol well, I see how little she is to be envied for all the gifts which fate has showered upon her. I pity her indeed, because all her golden clusters turn to dust and ashes; but I pity her most of all because she is bound to lose faith in her castle-building and chicken-counting, for lose faith she must as year after year the real, when it comes within the grasp of the senses, shows an ever increasing inferiority to the ideal. Then she will leave off castle-building, and, what consolation in life will then be left her, I am not prophet enough to determine.

AUSTRALIAN COLLOQUIALISMS.

SLANG is rapidly becoming cosmopolitan. It is an exchangeable commodity. America, in her popular speech, preserves and gives renewed vitality to words and phrases which, a few centuries ago, were in everyday use in England, and in return sends us a large and varied collection of expressions, the vigorous birth of the teeming West. Scores of colloquialisms, familiar to Anglo-Indians, are also familiar to Englishmen in general, both by use and by repute. Colonel Yule's great glossary is a lasting monument of the wealth of this vocabulary. Colonial popular coinages have not, as yet, become so well known here, nor have they affected our own slang to the same extent as the importations from America and from India. But the processes of adoption and absorption are certainly going on. “Larrikin” is perhaps the Australian word best known in this country. The “larrikin” is a familiar character in all lands. In New York he is a “rowdy.” In San Francisco he becomes a “hoodlum,” a scoundrel whose delight it is, with a company of his brother rascals, to descend in force from the American part of the city, upon the detested Chinamen, with results by no means pleasing to those natives of the Flowery Land. In England the “larrikin,” or the “hoodlum,” is known by the short and simple name of “rough.”

Various explanations have been given of the origin of the term “larrikin.” According to one story, the word dates from

the time of the gold fever, when Melbourne suffered greatly from an invasion of roughs and rowdies. A constable, a Scotchman, who was particularly active in the capture of these rascals, accused them to the magistrate as guilty of "larrikin," by which he meant "larking." Another authority says that it was an Irishman who, when charged in an Australian police-court with being drunk and disorderly, pleaded that he was only "larrikin." Mr. Archibald Forbes has given what is probably the most correct explanation. "A Sydney policeman of the Irish persuasion," he says, "brought up a rowdy youngster before the local beak. Asked to describe the conduct of the prisoner, he said, 'Av it plase yer honnor, the blagard wor a larrikin' (larking) 'all over the place.' The expression was taken hold of and applied."

The "larrikin" generally confines himself and his operations to the larger towns; but somewhat akin to him is what may be called his country cousin, the "sundowner." In the bush, and in all "up country" districts, at farm-houses and stations, quarters are always provided for strangers who may be in need of a night's lodging, and the manager will supply the wayfarer with flour for his "damper," and tea to boil in his "billy;" but should the stranger arrive before sunset, he is naturally expected to lend a hand and do some work about the place, by way of earning the shelter and supper ungrudgingly supplied. The "sundowner" is an able-bodied tramp with a strong disinclination to work. He perambulates the country, going "on the Wallaby," as it is strangely termed, nightly receiving the hospitality of the farmers and station-managers whom he honours with his presence, but being always careful to arrive at or after, never before, sundown, so that he may eat the bread of idleness and sleep the sleep of the slothful. In Australian parlance, the "sundowner" may further be described as a "dry hash," or a "stringy bark," that is, a ne'er-do-weel, a fellow not good for much, or, as our American cousins would say, a "mean cuss."

A "swagman" is a different character. The name is given to any one tramping the country for work, or any other purpose, and carrying his worldly goods slung round him in a bundle, which is always known as his "swag." The word "swag" is well known in this country to represent, in the slang of the criminal classes, the

booty or plunder obtained as the result of a successful robbery. When Mr. Sikes "cracks a crib," it is with the object of securing the "swag." But, in Australia, the "swag," also sometimes called a "drum," is the bundle, generally consisting of a large blanket rolled up, which contains the personal luggage of the man who carries, or "humps" it. It is usually worn as a roll passing over the right shoulder and under the left arm. Strapped to the back of the "swag" is a spade, and the swagman's equipment is completed by a small frying-pan, in which he concocts his "damper," and a "billy," a small tin can wherein tea or coffee can be boiled. The tea so made is naturally of rather a rough-and-ready description, and when the stalks and coarse particles of the fragrant leaf float thickly thereon, it is sometimes graphically styled "post-and-rails" tea.

Many Australian words and phrases are, as might be expected, born of and connected with station and bush life. "To go to camp," by a transference of its original meaning, now signifies, in the mouth of a dweller in houses, simply "to lie down," "to go to bed." A "corroboree" is a native dance, and a "gin" is a female aborigine. It may here be noted that Australians invariably speak of themselves as "colonials," not "colonists," and of the natives as "aboriginals," not "aborigines." A young man newly arrived in the Colonies from the Old Country is styled a "new chum," or a "lime-juice." The "new chum" generally betrays his character by the newer cut of his clothes, the shape and brilliance of his hat, otherwise his "stove-pipe," and by the topics of his conversation. But when, having laid aside his "store-clothes," and donned the bush costume, he goes up country to a sheep or cattle station, in order that he may get practical experience of the work on a large run, and acquaint himself at first hand with the thousand-and-one details, a knowledge of which is essential to successful sheep or cattle farming, he is there known as a "jackaroo" or "colonial-experience." He will have to work hard, to ride hard, and to be content with very little society; but his life will be healthy, his food, or "tucker," as it is called, plentiful, while his future is in his own hands. If he devotes himself to his work, and shows aptitude for the business, he will probably not have to wait very long before promotion will lift him out of the state of "jackaroodom."

A man who does odd jobs about a

station and who can be put to any kind of work, is called a "roustabout." "Pikers" are wild cattle; while a "brumby" is a wild horse. A common mode of expression is to be "within cooey" of a place. Originally, no doubt, this meant to be within the distance at which the well-known "cooey," or bush-cry, could be heard; now it simply means within easy reach of a place. To be "within cooey" of Sydney is to be at the distance of an easy journey therefrom.

The small farmers or selectors, both in New South Wales and in Victoria, are looked down upon by the owners of the large runs, and are somewhat contemptuously termed "cockatoo farmers." Some of these despised ones have obtained their holdings by the process known as "jumping a claim." The phrase was first used by the gold-miners. A miner selected a plot of ground upon which to try his luck, and declared his intention to claim or work so much of it, and if he remained a certain time thereon, the claim was his. He "jumped the claim." The expression soon had a wider application. When a man spied some small unclaimed parcel of land, and, squatting thereon, took and kept possession by virtue of having "nine points of the law" on his side, he was said to "jump a claim." The phrase is now applied to the appropriation of many things besides land. It was probably originally an importation from England. In a curious book, abounding in slang, published in 1789, called "Life's Painter of Variegated Characters," by George Parker, the author describes how sharpers, having caught a "greenhorn," "pick him up and take him to the alehouse to jump him," i.e., to rob him by tricks upon the cards. A thief of the present day would talk of "parlour jumping," when he referred to taking things from a sitting-room. The word has become purified of its evil associations in its passage to the southern continent, but the idea of seizure and appropriation is retained.

Log huts are commonly called "shanties," and a curse of the bush-districts of Australia is the "grog-shanty," an institution only too common. A hand employed on a sheep or cattle station, when he receives his periodical cheque from his employer, will often forthwith "make tracks" for the nearest "grog-shanty," and remain there until the whole of his hardy earned pay is consumed in drink.

Should he meet kindred spirits there, the money will, probably, be soon dissipated by the process of "shouting."

Each man in turn "shouts"—that is to say, stands treat to the rest of the gathering. When the money is gone, the bushman, a sadder if not a wiser man, will return to his work on the station and begin to earn the wherewithal for another such debauch. "Shouting" is a very common colonial expression for standing treat to strangers. A frequent invitation is to take a "long sleeved un," that is, a drink from a long pint glass. In the early days of the gold-fever such hospitality was often practised on a very extravagant scale. Many stories, some of which are probably apocryphal, are told of the various means by which lucky diggers would hasten to squander their gold. One man is said to have ordered the whole stock of champagne in a hotel cellar, numbering many score bottles, for which he paid some hundreds of pounds, to be placed in a skittle alley, and at these costly skittles he bowled away until there was not one left unsmashed. It may be noted by the way that "inns" do not exist in Australia, every house of refreshment is a "hotel." It may be only a wooden shanty up country; or it may rise to the dignity of a galvanised iron erection in a small township; or finally it may be a palatial building in a capital city; but the name remains the same.

A native of New South Wales is known as a "cornstalk," because the men generally grow tall and thin. The opposite kind of build, short and thickset, is called "nuggetty." A "gum-sucker" is a native of Tasmania, and owes his elegant nickname to the abundance of gum-trees in the Tasmanian forests. A native of Queensland is a "banana-lander." "Joey" is a familiar name for anything young or small, and is applied indifferently to a puppy, or a kitten, or a child, while a "wood-and-water Joey" is a hanger about hotels, and a doer of odd jobs.

The direct steam communication between San Francisco and Sydney has brought many Americans to seek their fortune in Australia, and with them have come many of the words and phrases characteristic of the speech of Western America. An Australian, like an American, speaks of "making his pile." "I pass," to "give a show," to be "euchred," and other card terms are as common in New South Wales as in California. Another expression is "to play a lone hand." One man will ask another, "Did you go to the theatre last

night?" "Yes." "With whom did you go?" "Oh, no one, I played a lone hand," meaning that he went alone.

A phrase more often heard in the country than in the towns is to "stick up," i.e., to stop and rob. In times gone by, it was by no means an uncommon occurrence for a coach to be "stuck up" by a band of bushrangers, whose shouts of "bail up," an invitation equivalent to our "shell out," supported by revolver barrels, terrified the hearts of the passengers. But a coach is now seldom interfered with, and to "stick up" is applied to less daring attempts to rob. Apart, however, from this meaning, the phrase "stuck up" has a very wide application: A man in any difficulty or trouble, or at a loss for money or other necessary, is said to be "stuck up." An Australian paper, referring to a team of English cricketers, recently wrote: "With only eleven playing members a visiting team can hardly expect to complete an Australian tour without being stuck up at times." "Bushed" is another word that has far outgrown its original signification. "To be bushed," of course, simply meant at first to be lost in the bush; but now it is applied to a person in any mental or physical difficulty or muddle. An Australian says that he is "bushed," just as an Englishman, equally characteristically, declares that he is "fogged." "My word" is an exclamation in constant and universal use.

These specimens of Australian colloquialisms by no means exhaust the popular vocabulary of the Antipodes, which is both large and varied; but a slight acquaintance with some of the commoner words and phrases may be of interest to many others besides "new chums."

UNCLE BOB'S NIECE.

By LESLIE KEITH.

Author of "The Chilcotes," etc.

CHAPTER XV.

TILLY had occasion to go out on some errand of her own next morning, no doubt an errand of deep feminine importance, since it took her from home soon after breakfast and alone.

She had no longer the unfamiliarity with London which made her first adventure into its mazes a very fearful joy. Already she was getting used to its indifference; and she joyed in the large measure of liberty

which is permitted to the young woman of her generation, who, even if she is pretty, may whisk about alone in hansoms, nobody saying her nay.

She came down the steps, smiling and bright, and calling out smiles in other faces too, even on the face of the calm Behrens, who stood at the entrance meditatively smoking as he had stood that earlier day long ago.

He threw away his cigar and went to greet her.

"You venture out betimes," he said. "You do not wait, like me, till the day is aired."

"I have very important business in hand," she nodded at him. "I think you can help me, Mr. Behrens."

"It will be a pleasure to me if I can."

"Can you tell me of a good place where one can get things for an invalid—nice things; tempting things to eat, for instance? Or—yes, something of that kind would be best to begin with," she mused.

He named one or two places, and she gravely jotted down the addresses in a little book she carried.

Mr. Paul Behrens was leaning against the opening of the hansom which she had entered. He seemed in no haste to remove himself, and he watched her while she wrote.

"I have not had an opportunity of offering my congratulations, Miss Burton," he said; "may I do so now—that is, if I am right in concluding that you are pleased to have found your relations?"

"Of course I am!" she looked up with a little wonder in her clear eyes. "If you had had nobody—nobody young, that is, belonging to you, you would understand how very pleasant a thing it is to have a cousin—two cousins, indeed. Most people have so many relations, and I have so few."

"No doubt, no doubt it is a charming surprise," said he with a sympathy which he did not feel, being, indeed, one of the people who rejoice in an immunity from near relations.

"Perhaps since your uncle is alone this morning, I may take this opportunity of wishing him joy also? If a cousin is a delightful acquisition, what must not a nephew be—the son of a favourite and long-lost sister, as I understand?"

Tilly looked up and flushed under the words. A wonder crossed her mind, as it had crossed it before, whether this man were sneering; but, being herself perfectly

sincere, she quickly dismissed the suspicion.

"He is busy this morning," she said, "and—Mr. Behrens, when one is old, as my uncle is, there is pain as well as pleasure in such a meeting—there is the past in it as well as the present."

She had no past to shadow her happiness, and yet his words brought back all yesterday's sorrowful story, and she took it with her on her way. She was impatiently restless over it. It seemed to her as if it could all have been so easily remedied. As for Mr. Behrens, he returned to the topmost step, and to his cigar and to his smile, the latter a little more pronounced, perhaps, than before. He was still standing there as if he were benignly blessing the throng upon the pavement below, when the bustle of a new arrival attracted his attention. A carriage, drawn by a handsome pair of horses, was driven rapidly to the hotel, and stopped sharply there. The footman, a very gorgeous personage, jumped as agilely as his dignity would allow to the ground, and flung the door wide. Already from his post the watcher could hear the name of "Burton" spoken eagerly, impressively, almost caressingly, and a little lady, too impatient, seemingly, to await the result of enquiry, descended and fluttered up the steps to satisfy herself in person.

"Another relation," said Behrens to himself, as he stood politely aside to allow the be-flowered and be-feathered little figure to pass him; "also a cousin, or possibly an aunt. Paul Behrens, you must look to your friendship; you must not allow this charming sentiment to languish—to be buried under an avalanche of cousins. Where the carcase is, there will the vultures gather."

The lady who called out this inelegant simile was no other than Mrs. Popham; and if it were necessary to liken her to a bird, she might more aptly have been illustrated by an owl unused to daylight, as she came blinking and stumbling up the steps, turning her eager, short-sighted eyes here and there as if she expected to find Tilly and her uncle camped in the enjoyment of the December rigours on the doorstep.

In her blind haste she swerved against Mr. Behrens, and recovered herself with a start.

"I beg your pardon," she said, and then catching at the first possible chance of information, she asked:

"Can you tell me if Mr. Burton lives here?"

"A Mr. Burton certainly lives here."

"And his niece?"

"And Miss Burton, also."

"It must be my Burtons!" cried Mrs. Popham, clasping her hands, as if she would restrain the eagerness of her soul. Then as she read his unresponsive face, a sudden doubt clouded her joy.

"Perhaps they are not at home?" she faltered.

"Miss Burton is not at home, but her uncle is, I believe."

"You are a friend of theirs?"

"I have that honour. May I have the pleasure of taking you to Mr. Burton?"

She accepted so readily that she hardly waited for him to swing the glass door wide; she almost tripped him up in the corridor; she blundered at the turning—so much eagerness had surely never before been imprisoned in so small a body.

"This is ironical, Paul," said the grave Behrens, addressing himself after an old habit, "that you should be the instrument of still further disturbing the placid flow of your friendship. This poor creature must be a sister, at the least. Had our dear Burton another sister besides the lost one, for whose son the feast was spread last night? What faithful creatures sisters are—to brothers who have succeeded!"

The cynic would fain have witnessed the interview, had that been possible; but he could do no more than usher the lady into the room where Uncle Bob sat writing. There was no joy depicted on the face Uncle Bob lifted from the letter over which he laboured; there was only extreme surprise, and something of annoyance and astonishment at the interruption.

As for Mrs. Popham, she waited for no invitation, for no preliminaries; she took him by assault. Before her guide could close the door upon her enthusiasm, he heard its first overflowings as she ran forwards, both thin hands outstretched.

"I have found you. I have found you at last!" she cried. "Only this morning by the nine o'clock post, the second post, did I hear your address and I came at once; I did not even wait to put on gloves—to change my gown. 'Let me go as I am!' I cried. 'Let me not lose another moment before seeing my dearest Tilly and her uncle!'"

Behrens softly shut the door and withdrew.

"She might have lingered to put on

gloves—even ten-button gloves, and another frock—a frock of state. Our good Burton's patience would have consented to the most prolonged toilet. He could very well have waited, this good man, for the interview. Perhaps some day he will even envy you, Paul: you who have neither father, mother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nor cousin, to love you when a stroke of luck comes your way."

When Tilly came home two hours later, radiant with her morning's work, and laden with packages, she paused of a sudden in the middle of the room, arrested there by the appearance of her uncle, as he lay huddled in one of the crimson velvet chairs.

"What is it?" she cried, her mind darting over all sorts of possibilities, haunted still by that disaster of long ago. "Has anything happened since I went away?"

"Anything happened?" said Uncle Bob with a groan, turning himself in his chair. "Everything has happened. You woman, my lass, beats everything."

"Oh—a woman," said Tilly, laughing with relief. "Now I can breathe again. A woman—and what has this woman done to you, and how is it that you look so—so——?" She surveyed him doubtfully.

Uncle Bob looked indeed a trifle awed, and perhaps furtively ashamed of himself, and perhaps, also, the more ready to assert himself, if an old gentleman with a very red face and an exhausted air can be said to look all these contradictory things.

"Out with it," said Tilly judicially. "You have something to 'fess,' I know it by your eye; you won't look at me. What naughty thing have you done since I last saw you?"

"Done!" he exploded in sudden wrath, "I haven't done a hand's turn. I've sat here and I've listened. I haven't got in a word edgewise. For the gift of the gab, my dear, there never was her equal, and I've known something of the length of women's tongues in my day."

"You haven't told me who she is," interrupted Tilly.

"And a precious time it was before I knew, though to hear her, you would think I was, next to you, her dearest friend—a woman I never set eyes on till this day."

"A friend of mine?"

"Ay, a friend of yours!" cried Uncle Bob, seizing his advantage; "of yours, not mine, my lass. I want none of your

weathercocks, shutting the door in our faces one day, and crying out that she couldn't live without us the next. 'Mem,' I said to her, when she pulled up to draw breath, 'we got our dinner, Tilly and me, though you didn't so much as ask us to take pot-luck with you; and we got rooms—pretty snug quarters as you'll see if you just cast your eye round; and as for friends—we've found some very much to our liking, and we're getting along pretty comfortably, and there's nothing I could name that we're in want of just at present.'"

"So Mrs. Popham has found us out," said Tilly, looking less surprised than he expected, and a trifle displeased. "I think Mr. Temple need not have been in such a hurry to betray us."

"Temple? What has he to do with it? It was your cousin Spencer, the meddlesome body, that sent her our direction. If Temple had done it——" He waved his hand in token of the menace that would have threatened that rash youth.

Tilly laughed as she went up and put her hand on his shoulder, and perched herself on the arm of his chair.

"You have given in," she said, "my dear diplomatist, you needn't pretend any more; you can't deceive me. You have forgiven Mrs. Popham, and after all, according to this same Mr. Temple, there was nothing to forgive. You've taken her back into favour. I shouldn't wonder if you've even consented to eat the dinner that was refused on the night of our arrival."

Uncle Bob's surrender had been even more abject and complete than she dreamed. He had pledged his presence, and that of Tilly, at—how many?—he was afraid to sum up the number of conciliatory feasts; the salt of a renewed peace was to savour an alarming succession of banquets, according to his confused memory.

"My dear," he said falteringly and with downward looks, "when a woman comes—a woman, you see, and a widow——"

Why the fact of Mrs. Popham's being a widow should complicate the matter, Tilly did not know, and neither apparently did the speaker, for he came to a precipitate pause.

"When charming woman stoops to apologise," said Tilly gaily, "what can a poor man do, but surrender? I believe it was you that did the repenting after all, in spite of that dreadful snub you administered. Perhaps you repented of that, too? I

believe you even promised that I should eat that dinner."

"It will be a very good dinner. She told me who were to be at it. Quite a lot of swells. Ah, that's what you may call society, my lass!" cried Uncle Bob, his elation peeping out now that his confession was made. "She is coming to see you, Tilly. She was here for a matter of two hours. Bless me! how the woman's tongue did wag!" he tried to snatch at a remnant of his grievance. "She couldn't stop any longer, but she is coming to see you this afternoon."

"Oh, this afternoon! Two visits from Mrs. Popham in one day! We mustn't be too uplifted," said the girl demurely; "we must try not to be proud; we must remember our station in life, when we come to be invited to meet the great."

"Fiddlesticks," growled Uncle Bob. "You're as good as them any day. And Tilly," he hid his embarrassment under an affectation of dissatisfaction, "you'll put on another rig-out." He examined her with struggling criticism. "What's the good of being rich if that's all ye can show for it?"

"Oh, I will make a toilet," she laughed. "I will put on my 'brows.' A second visit from Mrs. Popham in one day is worth that."

She stooped over him and kissed him. His simple vanity, so easily stirred into life, always touched her to a greater tenderness. At these times their positions seemed to be reversed, and it was she who took care of him, who loyally shielded him in her thoughts from so much as a shadow of criticism. Love does not blind, as it is a fashion with us to believe; it does not blind, but it makes allowance easy. Without thinking about it, without once sitting down to study or analyse his character, Tilly unconsciously knew all about her uncle; knew the facile weakness of his nature; the foolish, easily gratified, lightly swayed feelings; the impulses that led him hither and thither at any beck or call; the sound, kind heart that was his safest guide. She knew that she reigned there supreme, but she put his love for her to no base end; she used it rather to lift him up; always to put him in the kindest light, to make him seen at his worthiest. It would go hard indeed with anyone who should despise this kindest uncle in her presence; and those two hours which Mrs. Popham had spent in his society, lifted that fickle lady at once many degrees in her estima-

tion, and made the afternoon interview easy.

It might be supposed that Uncle Bob had had enough of his talkative visitor for one day, and yet, as the hour of her arrival approached, he was found hovering about the sitting-room, pushing the furniture into new combinations, and making blundering suggestions and amendments.

"Why hadn't Tilly put on a silk gown? Any old wife in Lilliesmuir might wear a stuff gown; if that was what she called a toilet, he didn't think much of it, and where were the pearls he had given her? Mrs. Popham would think that trumpery brooch was all she had to wear."

He was somewhat mollified when she came back to him, presently, in a smart tea-gown, all falling lace and ribbons, and she carried the cases containing the pearls in her hands.

"I've brought these to show her," she said, "though she doesn't need to be told, now-a-days, what an extravagant old uncle I have. I'd have brought the turquoises, too, but it would have been too cruel to stir Mrs. Popham's envy. Oh, yes; we'll have tea, I think. She will like that best."

For Uncle Bob was now suggesting what is called, in aldermanic phrase, a banquet of cake and wine. In Lilliesmuir exhausted nature had always to be sustained on a round of visits by port or sherry, served in massive cut decanters, each bearing the name of its contents on a silver label hung round its neck, to dissipate any doubts one might entertain as to the vintage. The wine—generally reposing with an air of accident on a side table—was always accompanied by cake presented in a heavy silver basket disinterred for such occasions, and by shortbread or bun, according to the season.

Do ladies, wearing their best bonnets and their best manners, still sip that fiery "sherry-wine" as if they liked it, and still wrestle politely with the hard, white sweets and the orange-peel that stud the generous portions of Pitcaithley bannocks, as if they liked these too? Or has custom yielded even in these remote outworks, before all-insidious fashion?

Uncle Bob thought very little of the hospitality that expresses itself in the offer of a "wishy-washy cup of tea—a poor wa' tea, where you had to hold the cup in your hand, and couldn't eat anything better than a biscuit for fear of soiling your gloves;" but he yielded

before the array of facts Tilly brought to bear on him. What "everybody" did—that to which Mrs. Popham was used—was, of course, the right thing; and so that erring and repentant lady was received with all honour, with open arms, and embraces, and libations.

Perhaps it was that Tilly knew a little more—perhaps it was that she expected a little less than two months before; but she felt that her attitude towards Mrs. Popham was changed from that old one that belonged to Lilliesmuir.

Mrs. Popham, in spite of her fervencies, her exclamations, her extravagances, subtly felt it too.

"You are different," she said, half wistfully, throwing her sharp chin back and looking at Tilly. "You are more beautiful than ever; but you are—you are—"

"Perhaps a trifle less rustic," said Tilly modestly. "I hope you don't find me grown too worldly, as Cousin Spencer is always fearing."

"My dear, you will never be that," said Mrs. Popham with solemn conviction.

"I don't know," smiled Tilly, "I run some risk, if you ask me to so many parties."

"But you will come!" cried the irrepressible Mrs. Popham, "since you won't come to live with me, you will at least do this! Your uncle has promised. I'm so proud, so glad! The Trumpingtons are coming—they put off another engagement to meet you. Lady Kensington is wild because I didn't ask her; she would give anything to worm herself in. Lady Craven—oh, that's for lunch, two o'clock Saturday—Lady Craven says she must positively have you all to herself. She won't share you with anybody. Dearest Tilly, you won't forget? You will remember all the days! I have written them down. And you won't let your dear uncle forget? Men do forget, you know. I always kept a little note-book of all Mr. Popham's engagements, and repeated them to him every day at breakfast. He used to say in his droll way that I was worse than an avenging conscience. Men say such queer things! Now, dearest, you won't disappoint me?"

"Oh, no," said Tilly, "we will come and be looked at. I suppose they will expect my uncle to wear a kilt, and speak broken English; and as for me, must I wear Rob Roy tartan and cairngorms, and

sing Jacobite songs? I haven't any cairngorms, and I never sing, except just to my uncle alone, and neither of us can speak a word of Gaelic. I won't forget," she said, her voice softening as she read the puzzled anxiety on Mrs. Popham's puckered face. "I will write all our engagements down in a little book I have. I only meant," she ended with a smile, "that I hope your friends won't be disappointed if they find us somewhat like other people."

"You can never be like other people," Mrs. Popham rushed at her and embraced her once more. "Other people can never be so beautiful."

Yes, it was not quite the same as it would have been, had Prince's Gate taken them to its shelter on that night long ago. Tilly had felt her wings since then; she was still a country girl, but she knew her power. She knew that she was very fair to see, and she knew—valuing this the more—that where others had succeeded she could hold her place; and was there not a hint, a savour of bad taste, of patronage, in this offered hospitality?

But she put that thought from her very soon. She was wholesomely glad to be reconciled to her former friend; it was always ill with her, when her little world was out of joint.

The only person who was displeased with this new turn of affairs was Fred Temple. To go with a great piece of news, and to find your tidings forestalled—the news snatched from your very lips, as it were, is never a pleasant experience; and it was Fred's, when he went intending to overwhelm Mrs. Popham with joy and gratitude. And, behold! she knew it all already, and had seen Tilly, and had engaged her for ever so many evenings deep, and she had not so much as a word of thanks to spare him for all the anxieties he had shared.

It was he who was to have found the Burtons, and it was John who was their real discoverer. It was John who was their kinsman; and, now, even the poor satisfaction of restoring them to Mrs. Popham was denied him. He was hardly even mollified by the invitation to dine, which was extended to him also. He had meant to be the chief personage, and it was but a super's part that was left him to play.

The white heather had brought him no special luck yet, but its day was to come.

